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AUTHOR Jensen, George M.
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ABSTRACT

The National Council on Year-round Education was formed in 1972 to aid professional schoolmen and supportive board members who feel that our traditional school attendance pattern is unsound from an educational, financial, and societal standpoint. The Council's president-elect cites here the past year's activities of the Council and presents examples of operating year-round programs. (Author/MLF)

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YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL:

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING

George M. Jensen, President-Elect
National Council on Year-round Education
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061

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Genuine excitement and enthusiasm are pretty rare commodities these days in the hum-drum daily routine of most American school districts. But, believe it or not, I think I've been able to spot some in a number of districts in various parts of the country. And, would you believe it, the areas where it's most apparent are those participating in one plan or another involving year-round school!

Now, I don't wish to create the impression that everywhere some form of year-round school is being implemented everybody--staff, teachers, students, parents and the general public--is wildly in favor of the change. This simply is not so. The matter is too controversial--has too many faces, if you please, to secure complete and universal approval in such a short order. What I do wish to make plain is that wherever the program has been soundly and painstakingly presented and instituted it generates excitement and genuine enthusiasm among most participants. This is especially true where administrative and board leadership has been fair and firm. In a few areas where the administration and the board have only been paying "lip service" to an innovative idea and implementation has been half-hearted or overly rapid the results thus far have been just what you might expect--controversial and inconclusive. Dr. Orville Aftreth, Assistant Superintendent of San Diego City Schools, puts it this way: "Teachers, parents and students adequately informed and actively involved in year-round school programs are generally favorably disposed toward and enthusiastic about the program. Those not yet actually involved are generally opposed."

In a nut-shell, we can say that most of the results thus far--especially the developments of the past year or so, have been so

encouraging that they have inspired a great deal of progress. I hope in the next few minutes to give you a birds-eye view of "what's cookin'" aside from the developments in the state of Georgia and in Jefferson County, Kentucky, with which you are now familiar.

This whole process of moving from a traditional program and unquestioned calendar into an innovative program with a new tempo and updated calendar, including many new educational time lines, involves a really colossal job of mind-changing. Recognizing this, a dedicated group of educators and laymen worked quietly together for several years to prepare the groundwork for the formation of a new national organization, one capable of aiding and abetting those imaginative and daring professional schoolmen and supportive board members who have long felt that our traditional school attendance pattern was a handicapping anachronism--unsound in today's world from an educational, financial and societal standpoint.

During the year just past such an organization has come into being. I refer to the new National Council on Year-round Education. It was formed in San Diego, California at the 4th National Seminar on Year-round Education in February of 1972. After a reading of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee which researched the idea, the Seminar attendees voted unanimously to proceed with the business of establishing the Council. They approved a constitution and preliminary set of by-laws and nominated from the floor a slate of officers and directors. These were voted upon and the Council was in business. This was truly an exciting climax to the Seminar.

The first board meeting convened later that same day (February 28) and among other actions it assured the continuity of the National

Seminars on Year-round Schools by accepting the offer of the State Department of Public Instruction of Virginia to sponsor and organize the 5th National Seminar in May of 1973. The board also accepted the bid of a group from Illinois to sponsor the 6th National Seminar in Chicago in April of 1974.

Thus it has come about that while year-round school has been cussed and discussed for many years by school masters and laymen alike, the idea has never before achieved sufficient backing or acceptance to warrant the formation of such a nationally based organization as the Council. Council offices are located at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University at Blacksburg, Virginia. Dr. Wayne Worner, former superintendent of schools at Fargo, North Dakota is administrative co-ordinator. Dr. Wayne H. White, superintendent of Florida's Brevard County school system, is the organization's first president.

The Council has an ambitious program in the works. It's first accomplishment has been to field the first national publication dealing solely with year-round school. Dubbed "The Year-rounder", it has had two editions thus far and the third is due in May. A speakers' bureau is in formation, as is a completely comprehensive and all-inclusive bibliography on year-round school.

Another significant development recently has been the publication of the findings of the 4th annual Gallup Poll of Public Attitudes toward Education. Sponsored by C.F.K., Ltd., the Gallup Education Surveys are now established as a major source of information concerning the status and trends of opinion, both professional and lay, about significant school questions.

This most recent survey (which, incidentally, was made quite

generally available through publication in the Phi Delta Kappan for September, 1972) covered a number of significant areas, among them year-round school. To quote directly from the survey: "The percentage of citizens favoring year-round school has now reached a clear majority. For the nation the results show:

Approve	53%
Disapprove	41%
No opinion	6%"

To continue the quote: "The professional educator group is even more favorably inclined toward this proposal as revealed by the following figures:

Approve	66%
Disapprove	30%
No opinion	4%

"The trend in favor of the year-round concept is evidenced by comparing the 1970 survey with the present. Two years ago a total of 43% of the nation's adults approved, 50% disapproved and 8% had no opinion."

In my estimation this represents very rapid progress in the mind-changing business and has caused a lot of excitement in the camps of those whose efforts in behalf of this much-needed change have met with little reward until quite recently.

Experience with the 45/15 concept as implemented by Valley View School District #96 in Illinois has been so successful that in addition to co-sponsoring the 6th National Seminar in Chicago in 1974 that state's Department of Education is now in the process of making a "how to do it" sound and color film nearly one hour in length for general distribution not only in Illinois but elsewhere.

Several years ago N.E.A. made a sort of half-hearted pass at the subject in a rather listless 16 mm. film. This past year, however, a large corporation appropriated the sum of $120,000 to produce a half hour sound and color movie featuring year-round education. To be premiered at the opening session of the 5th National Seminar on Year-round Education at Virginia Beach, Virginia May 8th through the 11th, this film is being narrated by a nationally known figure and features among others a strong statement of endorsement by Senator Charles Percy of Illinois. It will be available beginning sometime this summer everywhere in the country through the film libraries of Modern Talking Pictures, Inc. It is being produced and made available as a public service by North American Van Lines, Inc. of Fort Wayne, Indiana. It is a documentary type film. Large, successful business firms are not noted for betting on dead horses, so to speak, and it therefore follows that North American Van Lines put plenty of thought and investigative effort behind their decision to produce this film. To Chairman of the Board, Richard J. Caley, must go the credit for the final decision to render this service to education.

Yet another film for broad distribution is now in the planning stage for release in 1974. Through a grant from the National Warehousemen's Technical Foundation and with the assistance of three large non-competing firms, it is hoped to premiere the picture at the 6th National Seminar in Chicago in April of 1974. Not a documentary but an out and out "selling" film, it will dramatize the success of a number of districts now involved in year-round school. It will also point out the many educational and societal implications of year-round school that have not been widely discussed thus far.

Several states are currently "hot-beds" of discussion both pro and con on year-round school. California, with 49 school districts either involved and operating one plan or another or well into the planning stage, probably leads the list. Texas, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Illinois, Florida, Georgia, Oregon and South Carolina are all becoming more deeply involved. Some progress has also been noted in Kansas, Vermont, Minnesota, Ohio, Missouri, New Jersey, Tennessee and Kentucky.

Our press clipping service has noted far more local and regional seminars on year-round school than at any time in the 10 years we've been monitoring the progress of this developing movement. I have recently participated in two such seminars, one in Florida and one in Michigan. If the interest shown by the participants in both of these is any indication of what's happening elsewhere, we're well on our way.

As a sample of what I mean, one school district in Michigan, Northville, started a voluntary 45/15 plan in one of its schools last July. It involved 171 students. In December of 1972 the school board voted to greatly expand the program because it had been so successful. According to the Detroit News of February 22, 1973, the Northville student, teacher and parent response has been, to use the words in the headlines, "tremendous"! We can say the same about other such programs. Take the 45/15 concept as implemented in the Dale City area of Manassas, Virginia. The program there is nearly two years old and going strong.

In a recent newspaper story in the Roanoke, Virginia Times, staff education writer Jerrie Alkin, who personally investigated the Prince William County, Virginia school system to check on the progress of their year-round program, headlined her story, "Pessimism Gives Way to

Wide Acceptance." Here's just one paragraph from her full page story: "The 45/15 year-round school plan has had a banner year in Prince William County, Virginia. By a unanimous vote of the school board, which won a standing ovation from over 600 persons attending a recent meeting, 45/15 will continue and be expanded in Dale City during the coming year. Before it went into effect there were dour predictions of failure, such as 'piecemeal education', 'a family wrecker', 'the end of the line for advanced teacher training', 'the kiss of death for family vacations together', etc. Now, after eight months, those invovled in the program are so excited and enthusiastic a visitor has the feeling of being brain-washed!"

Because Carrollton, Ohio, plans to embark on a year-round program in the near future the Dayton, Ohio JOURNAL HERALD, which also covers the Carrollton area, sent its Washington correspondent, Pat Ordovensky, to Dale City recently to make an unprejudiced on-the-spot evaluation of their year-round experience. In a story running over a page and a half, headlined "Year-round School as Dale City Sees It after Almost Two Years", subtitled "Dale City Experience Exciting", Mr. Ordovensky made pretty much the same observations as the writer I previously quoted. In addition, by this time it had been proven that a properly structured year-round program not only builds friends among teachers, students and parents but in addition it actually can save money for the district. To quote from the story, "The cost analysis was done by Education Turn Key Systems, Inc. of Washington, D.C. The cost per pupil in the Godwin Middle School, for example, was $1,033.60 under 45/15 as opposed to a cost of $1,143.60 in a conventional program, a saving of 9.6%."

I am hopeful that this and other similar experiences around the

country will finally disprove the common assumption, especially among educators, that if it costs "X" dollars to run a 9-month school program on the traditional calendar it will cost "X plus" dollars to operate a 12 months program. It simply isn't so unless you structure your operation like Atlanta or Jefferson County, Kentucky where you permit optional attendance and simply add a summer quarter to your 9-month program.

In Minnesota they are preparing to embark on a most exciting experiment. They are going to create a city of 250,000 people from absolute scratch up in the forests of Aitkin County. The children in this new town, currently referred to as MXC (Minnesota Experimental City), are going to have to be educated. The planners, among them Dean Athelstan Spilhaus, Buckminster Fuller and others, have the chance to develop the educational program from scratch. Are they contemplating a traditional 9-month calendar? I recently asked this question of Dr. Bon Barnes who heads the MXC education task force. His answer: "We have never considered such a restricted learning environment."

With what we have learned over the past two years, I wonder how much longer we are going to put up with the restrictive, traditional calendar. California's State Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Wilson Riles, says he believes most of California's schools will be year-round within 10 years or less. Forbes Bottomly, Superintendent of Seattle's schools, has this to say: "I think the movement is now well on the road. The growth that we have witnessed in the last two years will be accelerated as people become a little braver in their search for a better way to run the railroad."

How long do you think it will take your district to meet this challenge of a better way?

Addenda: time permitting

1. Congressional hearings April 24, 1972
2. "Nation's Business" survey, July 1972
3. Recognition of Year-round school by M.S.E.R.A. November 1972
   and A.E.R.A. February 1973
4. Detroit News story, March 7, 1973 - "Year-round schools predicted for Detroit. Statement of S. Martin Taylor, Director of Michigan Employment Security Commission.